

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 39 (September 22-28, 2013)

Many of the parables of Jesus teach about the Kingdom of Heaven. We will continue to study more of these this week.

Sunday -- September 22 (Matthew 22:1-14)

Once again, I want you to read the entire text each day as we study another of the kingdom parables. The characters in this one are easy to discern. **God the Father** is the King who is inviting guests to the wedding banquet for His **Son, Jesus**. The servants are the **prophets** and other **religious leaders** who have been sent to the Jews to invite them to the celebration. God's chosen people, however, refuse the invitation (v. 1-3). Can you imagine what an insult this is to the Creator of the universe? In His patience, He sends out additional servants to tell the Jews that everything is ready for the wedding banquet (v. 4). They ignore the invitation and go off to their own work (v. 5). Others violate God's servants and even kill some of them (v. 6). How would you react if your invited guests ignored an invitation to your only son's wedding? We will see how God deals with this in tomorrow's devotions.

Monday -- September 23 (Matthew 22:1-14)

The King's patience runs out, and He pronounces judgment on the people who refuse to come as well as on their city. This came to pass in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed and burned by the Romans. The King now sends invitations to anyone along life's pathway whom His servants come across (v. 8-9). This pictures the Gospel going out to Gentiles with the invitation to come to Jesus and be part of the Lamb's Wedding Supper (see Revelation 19:1-10). The invitation is to "whosoever will" and is not determined by the goodness (or badness) of the recipient (v. 10). This, of course, pictures **salvation by grace through faith alone** (see Ephesians 2:8-10). The new invitees respond favorably and fill the banquet hall for the happy occasion. If the story ended there, it would be great for the Gentiles and tough for the Jews. Our Lord has an important truth, however, that He will teach us in tomorrow's study.

Tuesday -- September 24 (Matthew 22:1-14)

The king comes in to inspect the guests who have accepted His invitation and filled the banquet hall. He notices that one of them is not wearing the special wedding robe he has provided for the occasion (v. 11). In a wedding given by a Jew in those days, the father provided identical robes for each guest to wear so that the focus would be exclusively on the bride and groom. This scene pictures the "robe of righteousness" purchased for us by the death of Jesus on Calvary (see Isaiah 61:10). This costly robe replaces the "filthy rags" based on **our own** righteous acts that we wear (see Isaiah 64:6). Do you see the picture our Lord is painting? No one can ever come to His wedding unless he/she has accepted His willing death as full payment for his/her sins. Many in today's churches still talk about their own sacrificial works guaranteeing them a place in heaven. Learn from this parable and simply trust Jesus to provide all you need for life in the kingdom.

Wednesday -- September 25 (Matthew 22:1-14)

The Lord concludes His parable by saying that the man without wedding clothes will be thrown out of the banquet hall into the darkness where he will be in agony (v. 13). Of course, this pictures **hell** for anyone who refuses to put on the righteousness of Christ alone. Many in our enlightened society reject the doctrine of hell, but it is clearly taught by Jesus in several places in the New Testament. The Lord is not willing that **anyone** should perish; He wants **everyone** to come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, His invitation goes out to everyone in the world, Jews and Gentiles. Only those who come by the way of the cross will be accepted (v. 14). Do you know someone who thinks he/she has been good enough to be assured of heaven? Do you know anyone who thinks hell, if it exists, is only for the worst of the worst, like Hitler? Warn them to believe the entire Word of God so that they will not be found wearing their own garments on judgment day.

Thursday -- September 26 (Matthew 25:1-13)

The parables in Matthew 25 (as well as the teachings in Matthew 24) all picture life during the **tribulation**. It is often taught as though the virgins are looking for the **rapture**, but the context clearly states the occasion is the **wedding of the Lamb** that takes place following the tribulation. Jesus uses today's parable to amplify what He taught in Matthew 24:13: "but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." During the tribulation, there will be those who truly believe that the Bridegroom (Jesus) will be coming back soon, but there will also be those who half-heartedly believe He is coming. The same is true today when salvation is free and available to anyone who will receive Jesus into his/her heart. Those who really give their life to Christ will endure to the end (death or rapture), but those who give lip service to the faith will fall by the wayside. Are you ready for **the rapture**? Do you know for sure that you are included in the **Lamb's Book of Life**? If so, then you are among those excitedly awaiting the sound of the trumpet.

Friday -- September 27 (Matthew 25:1-13)

Jesus teaches that only 50% of those **expecting His return** will actually be ready (v. 2-4; see also Matthew 24:40-41). I can't help but wonder if the percentage is any higher in today's churches. A lot of time has passed since Jesus told His disciples to expect His return (Acts 1:4-8). Some, like the virgins in the parable, have grown tired and have fallen asleep. I believe the midnight hour is fast approaching (v. 6). Some have even begun to question whether or not He will return (see 2 Peter 3:3-4). While it is true that we do not know the day or the hour (v. 13), it is also true that our Lord gives us numerous signs to watch for during the last days. I will be preaching on many of those this fall. If you are among those who sit under my teaching/preaching ministry, try to be present as often as you can and get the tapes from the messages you miss. These are exciting days! Don't miss the rapture for the world!

Saturday -- September 28 (Matthew 25:1-13)

Five of the most painful words ever spoken by our Lord appear in verse 10: "And the door was shut." We are living in the **Day of Grace** that is also call **The Church Age**. God knows exactly how many Gentiles will be saved prior to the rapture of the church (see Romans 11:25). Isaiah prophesied about this period of Biblical history in Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon." Perhaps even more painful words from Jesus appear in verse 12: "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." Can you stop for a moment to meditate on how horrible it would be to hear these words? Please accept Him into your heart and begin right now to live for Him according to His Word. Eternity is a long, long time.